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Punjab's stark reality: 2.3% of India's population, 44.5% of its heroin seizures

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Chandigarh: Punjab, which has been battling drug smuggling all along its border with Pakistan, accounts for 44.5% of all heroin seizures in the country — a stark figure given that it makes up just 2.3% of the country's population.

According to the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) annual report for 2024, released by Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday, Punjab topped the country for heroin seizures by drug law enforcement agencies (DLEAs) during the year. In all, 1,150kg heroin was seized in the state, against total of 2,596kg of the narcotic being seized across the country.

New Delhi was in the second place in terms of heroin seizures, with nearly 234kg heroin seized in 2024. Assam is at number three (186 kg), Mizoram at four (134 kg), Rajasthan at five (118 kg), West Bengal at six (116 kg), and Jammu and Kashmir at seven (114 kg). No eighth state across the country, in terms of heroin seizure, made it to three digits, as per the report.

Punjab also topped in the seizure of tablets of all types (habit-forming pills), with a massive 2.94 crore pills caught by DLEAs in 2024. Notorious for the use of pharmaceutical opioids and habit-forming pills, Uttar Pradesh was a

Amount of drugs seized

Heroin | 187kg

Methamphetamine | 5.4kg

Opium | 4.2kg

Rajasthan | 15

Heroin | 39kg

Jammu & Kashmir | 1

Heroin | .34kg

Nepal nationals top arrested foreigners

Nepal — recently hit by the Gen Z protests that overthrew the previous regime — now holds the dubious distinction of its nationals making up for the maximum number of foreigners arrested in drug cases in India in 2024. According to the NCB annual report for 2024, of the 660 foreigners arrested in drug cases in India in 2024, 203 Nepalese were arrested by drug law enforcement agencies (DLEAs) in India in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act cases. The only other country that reached three figures in terms of arrests in drug cases was Nigeria, with 106 of its nationals arrested in NDPS Act cases by DLEAs, as per the report. The report mentions 200 arrested in NDPS Act cases from nationalities categorised as "others." In addition to this "others" category, there were five countries whose nationals reached double digits in terms of arrests. They were Myanmar (25 arrests), Bangladesh (18), Ivory Coast (14), Ghana (13), and Iceland (10).